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C O N F I D E N T I A L TEL AVIV 002702

SIPDIS

PLEASE PASS TO DEPUTY SECRETARY STEINBERG

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/02/2019

TAGS: [PREL](#) [KWBG](#) [IS](#)

SUBJECT: DEPUTY SECRETARY RAISES TRANSIT OF GAZA STUDENTS  
WITH SHIN BET: FOLLOWUP

REF: TEL AVIV 2519

Classified By: Ambassador James B. Cunningham; reasons 1.4 b/d

[¶1.](#) (C) Following up on DepSec Steinberg's discussion with Shin Bet on transit of Gazan students through Israel (reftel), EconCouns discussed possible options with Shin Bet's head of international relations, Alan Moss. Moss said he had met with his COGAT counterpart, Uri Singer, and they had reviewed possible options under the 2008 law requiring Gazan participants in international educational programs to be escorted through Israeli territory while en route to or from international destinations.

[¶2.](#) (C) Based on those discussions, Moss said that while the escort requirement cannot be waived, the escorts need not have diplomatic status. The law would permit the escort responsibility to be contracted out to a private firm or NGO subject only to GOI vetting of the contractor to rule out any ties to terrorist organizations or other conditions that might limit the contractor's ability to be held accountable in the event the escorted student(s) did not comply with the provisions under which they were allowed entry into Israel.

[¶3.](#) (C) In subsequent conversations between Econoffs and Shin Bet/COGAT, GOI officials confirmed Embassy's view that ConGen locally engaged staff (LES) could also escort students, subject to the condition that the individuals be vetted by Shin Bet. They said this condition would limit the escort duty to Israeli citizen LES, since Jerusalem ID holders could not be properly vetted. COGAT officials expressed concern that such Israeli citizens be provided adequate security against potential attacks or efforts by Gazan students to slip away from the escorted group for "unauthorized activities." In a later conversation, COGAT agreed that this was not a requirement under the 2008 regulation, but rather, a matter of making sure the local employee could meet his/her escort responsibilities. Embassy will continue to explore with GOI exactly what the accountability/responsibility requirements entail.

[¶4.](#) (SBU) ConGen is currently reviewing the options outlined above to determine which is the least-risk, least-cost means of moving students from Gaza through Israel to their onward destinations.

[¶5.](#) (U) This cable was coordinated with ConGen Jerusalem.  
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